

COPY of a LETTER,

CONTAINING

A DESCRIPTION OF
A ROMAN PAVEMENT

FOUND NEAR

GRANTHAM, LINCOLNSHIRE;

WITH

THE ECONOMY OF THE ROMAN TIMES

IN THAT PART OF ENGLAND.

COMMUNICATED TO

Dr. RUTTY, SECRETARY TO THE ROYAL SOCIETY,

By W. STUKELEY, M. D. F. R. S.

SIR,

LAST week I had an occasion of examining a curious piece of Roman Antiquity discovered near us, and resolved to send you the following account of it, together with a Drawing I made of it.

In February, 1727, plowing in the open fields at Denton, about two miles and a half from Grantham, they happened upon a Pavement of Mosaic work, as commonly called; I had notice of it from my neighbour, the Rev. Mr. Saul, minister of Harlaxton, the next parish. I went to see it, it is partly in the glebe land, partly in Madam Welby's, who assisted us with workmen to clear it. It has been a very large Room, about thirty feet both ways, as we found by digging in divers places; but, being so near the surface, not above a foot or a foot and a half deep, and having been plowed over, time out of mind, the major part of it is ruined and imperfect. Besides many fragments of it, we had only the pleasure of viewing one piece entire, which was thirty feet long and six feet broad, and this was extremely pretty. There are only three colours, white, red, and blue; but of the middle-most, or most beautiful part of it, which is nine feet long and three broad, the white and red are double in quantity to the blue; the colours lively, the pattern or figure finely designed, as you will see by the drawing which is exactly taken. In the outmost part, or verge of the work, there is no variety of colour, being entirely blue, and that made of much larger squares than the rest; on the East and West sides it was six feet broad, on the North but three feet. The red is formed out of the Roman bricks, fe-

veral fragments of which we found about the work; the white is made of the common lime-stone of our country; the blue, of the stone that comes from Bennington, towards Newark, five miles from that place, and those colours were worked together and produced a good effect. We found in digging, several parts of the foundations of the walls which terminated this Room, and seemingly of other Rooms adjacent; which foundations were made of common white stones of the country, set on edge side by side, with here and there a bit of Roman brick. The building was placed parallel with the quarters of the heavens. They found in digging, some human bones, and I took up many bones of a hand, which probably belonged to some unfortunate person killed in the ruins, or when the house was demolished.

After this short description of the work, take the following account of the Economy of the Roman times in this part of the country.

Three miles south of Grantham is Great Paunton, a village set in a sweet valley, where the beginnings of the River Witham are collected from many springs a little higher up; hard by upon the edge of the hill, runs the great Roman Road called Hermenstreet. This village I asserted in my Itinerary, to be the *Causernis* in Antoninus's Itinerary, which commentators have found difficulty in settling; the *Termini*, or two Towns, between which it is placed in *Iter V*, with the distance of the miles, sufficiently establish the situation, and they are well known and acknowledged: thus *DUROBRIVAS*, *CAUSENNIUM* m. p. xxx. *LINDUM* m. p. xxvi; for Paunton is thirty Roman miles from *Durobrivæ*, or the passage of the Hermenstreet over the New River above Peterborough, and twenty-six from Lincoln. At Paunton, since I came to live at Grantham, I have heard of many Antiquities being found, especially Mosaic Pavements; and undoubtedly it was the Station upon the Hermenstreet, between Bridgecasterton, twelve Roman miles off, and Ancaster, seven miles, which were likewise Roman Stations, and walled about, but now their names are lost. All about Paunton the Romans inhabited very frequent, at Kirk Stoke particularly, where great quantities of Antiquities have been found; likewise at Strawston, many Roman Coins have been dug up, which I have seen in the possession of my neighbour, Captain Hacket, who owns the Town: he says subterraneous Vaults have also been found there; and near it is the place where our Pavement was discovered.

Between Paunton and Grantham a Road passes the River at Saltersford; this Road is called Saltergate, and much frequented: I believe it has continued ever since the Roman times, being the passage from Holland in Lincolnshire, by Briggend Causey, (a Roman work) to all the Towns on the Foss way in Nottinghamshire and Leicestershire; for along this way

they carried Salt, made by the Sea-side, to those mediterranean parts, both in Roman and Saxon times. Our Pavement stands within a bow-shot of this Road, upon very high ground, and seems to have been a summer villa, or pleasure-house; where, on one side they were entertained with travellers going on the road; on the other they commanded a most noble prospect Northwards, of a prodigious extent. When upon the spot, we may without difficulty see the reason why they fixed it in that very point; and it is the most delightful place that can be imagined for a summer retreat. It is placed just at the head of a convallis, or lesser valley, falling down into the great valley of Denton, underneath, from which Denton has its name, signifying the town in the valley. This convallis is extremely beautiful, and running northward, must be very pleasant and cool in summer time. Our villa had this further advantage in its situation, that it commanded a view through the opening or clays that in this place appears between Barrowby and Wolfthorp Hills, which leads the eye into the boundless prospect of the Vale of Belvoir; you see from hence Newark, the front of Kelham-Park and House, Southwell Minster, Sherwood Forest, &c. besides the neighbouring Castle of Belvoir, where in those times was a Roman exploratory Camp, likewise the Roman Camp of Honnington; in so much, that we may well commend the wisdom and good taste of the builder, who contrived so well for security and pleasure. For air, the country hereabouts has always, and deservedly, been reckoned the Montpellier of England; for water, wood, health, and prospect, it may be thought the Fieschi.

I am,

Your most obedient servant and Brother,

WILLIAM STUKELEY.

W. FOWLER having been desired to engrave and publish a Print from the Drawing by Dr. STUKELEY, mentioned in the above Letter, a Copy of which was for that purpose given to him by Miss WELBY, as was also a Copy of Dr. STUKELEY's Letter by WILLIAM EARL WELBY, of Denton-House, Esq. and wishing previously to examine the Pavement itself, in his endeavours to explore it, discovered another Pavement, his Print of which is that dated November 1st, 1800. From its proximity to the known situation of that described by Dr. Stukeley, the two Pavements are, doubtless, parts of the same Roman Villa, which induced W. FOWLER to describe it on his Plate as tho' it had been discovered "some years ago," though it is evident that part was not found 'till September, 1800.

About half a Mile North-East of these Pavements, in a Field called the Warcliffe, in the Lordship of Harlaxton, was ploughed up a Brass Vessel containing a Golden Helmet of most antique make, set with Jewels, which was presented to Catherine of Spain, Dowager of Henry the eighth.—See Camden's *Britannia*.

WINTERTON, FEBRUARY 7th, 1801.

W. BROOKE, PRINTER, LINCOLN.

[3]

they carried Salt, made by the Sea, to their Mediterranean ports both in Roman and Saxon times. Our Fawcett (Hill) is a low-lying ridge of the Road, upon very high ground, and seems to have been a Roman villa or pleasure house, where on one side they were entertained with travellers going on the road; on the other they could see a noble prospect. Northwards, of a magnificent extent. When upon the foot, we may with our difficulty see the reason why it is fixed in that very point, and it is the most delightful place that can be imagined for a summer retreat. It is placed just at the head of a convall, or better valley, falling down into the great valley of Dorset, whence from which Dorset has its name, looking the view in the valley. This convall is extremely fertile, and running northwards, most of very pleasant and cool in summer time. Our villa had this further advantage in its situation, that it commanded a view through the open country, as far as the eye could reach, between Birtwold and Wootton Bassett, which looks the eye into the boundless prospect of the Vale of Eborac, and the fine woodlands of the front of Kesham Park and Wood. Southward, looking down the valley, we behold the neighbourhood of Birtwold, where in those times was a Roman exploratory Camp, the name the Roman Camp of Honington; in so much that we may well imagine the wisdom and good taste of the builder, who contrived to well sit the villa and pleasure. For as the country hereabouts has always been rich and fertile, been reckoned the Mount of England; for water, soil, health and prospect, it may be thought the best.

Your most obedient servant and Son,
WILLIAM STURKEY.

W. BOWLER having been obliged to depart and a bill of exchange from the Drawing by the Secretary, mentioned in the above letter, a copy of which was sent to that purpose given to him by Miss Wain, as was also a copy of Dr. Sturkey's letter by WILLIAM STURKEY, Esq. and which being previously returned to the Secretary, he is in the end, as to explore it, discovered another drawing, the front of which is that dated November 17, 1790. From its proximity to the known situation of the first, it is probable, the two are connected, and the second, which is the front of the house, is a drawing to describe it on the same scale as the first, which is dated "1790, June 10th," though it is evident that it was not found till September, 1790.

About half a mile North-East of this Farmhouse is a Field called the "Fawcett," in the Parish of Birtwold, which was purchased up a long while since by a Gentleman of the name of Fawcett, who was presented to the Bishopric of Exeter, and was the origin of the name.

Wootton Bassett, February 21st 1791.

W. BOWLER, PRINTER, LINCOLN.